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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this teaching module is to enable participants to demonstrate and apply their knowledge of comprehension and critical thinking skills, using the Watson-Glaser Test of Critical Thinking Ability. Critical thinking is defined as an attitude of thoughtful consideration of the problems and subjects that come within one's experience, knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning used to deal with such problems and subjects, and skill in applying such methods. Skill in making evaluative and critical decisions becomes especially important because of mass media influence on public opinion. Participants take the Watson-Glaser Test as a preassessment, choose activities from a list of alternatives, and retake the test as a postassessment. (2B)

TEACHER CORPS BILINGUAL PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD
WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

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MODULAR SEQUENCE: TEACHING READING TO BILINGUAL LEARNERS

TTP 002.08 DEVELOPING COMPREHENSION AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS (K-6)

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
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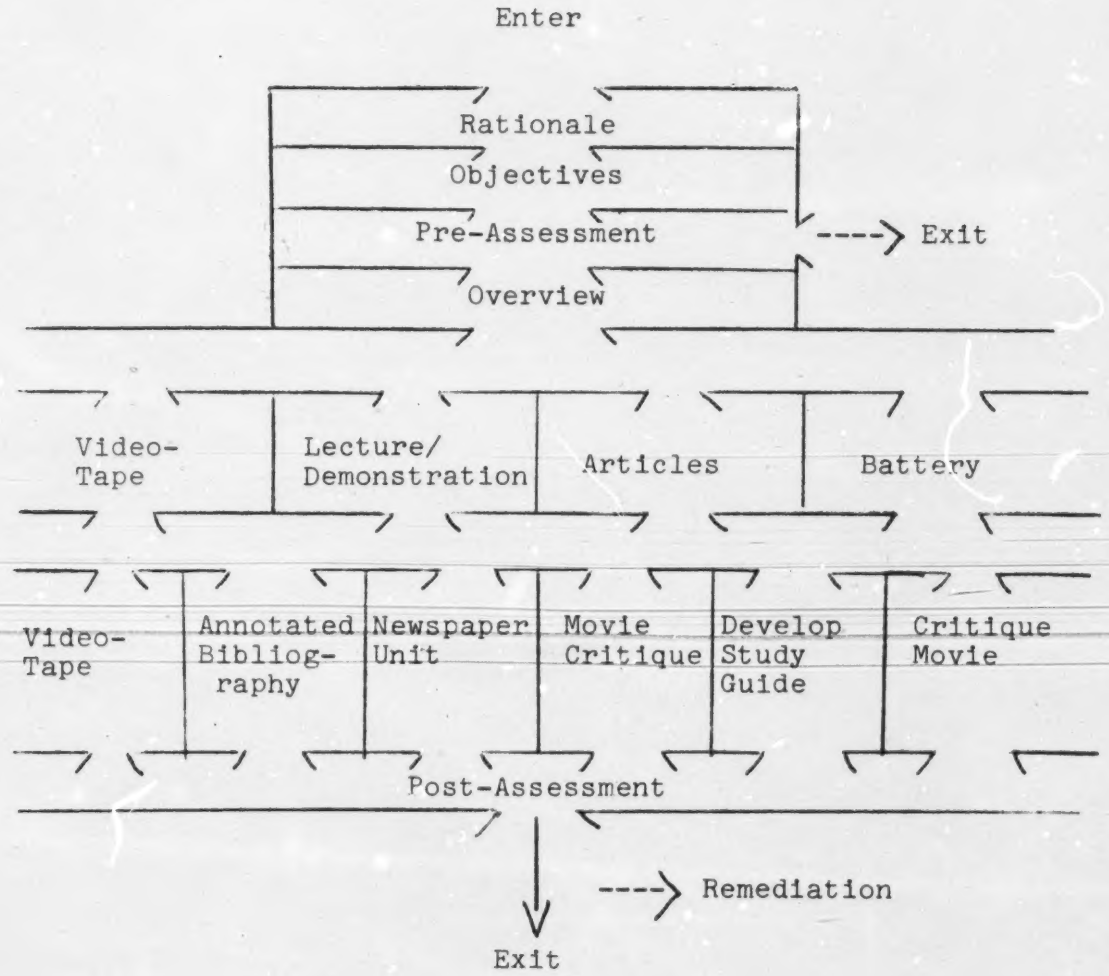
DEVELOPING COMPREHENSION AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS K-6



RATIONALE

Critical thinking is defined as an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of ones' experiences, knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning, and some skill in applying those methods.

A democratic society presupposes citizens possess the ability to reason logically and think clearly. Because our society encourages the existence of many points of view, the average citizen must become skilled in making evaluative and critical decisions. A basic tenet of a democratic state is that the populace will act, vote, purchase, and evaluate in a manner which will benefit society at large. As society becomes more complex, the critical choices are not always clear. The skill of molding opinion has become a science in the hands of the politicians and the advertising man. In many cases the effect of mass media has intensified this problem of making critical choices so that the average citizen is at the mercy of those who want his vote, purchase or allegiance.

OBJECTIVES

Given a series of learning activities on developing comprehension and critical thinking skills, the participant will be able to:

- demonstrate and apply his knowledge of comprehension and critical thinking skills by correctly answering alternate questions on the Watson-Glaser Test of Critical Thinking Ability

PRE-ASSESSMENT

To assess your prior mastery of the terminal obkectives of this unit of work, complete the following exercise.

Directions: Complete the odd-numbered items from the Watson-Glaser Test of Critical Thinking Ability.

OVERVIEW

Operational definitions of critical thinking can be developed through a listing of various skill components:

i.e.

1. ability to analyze propaganda techniques in advertising and editorials;
2. ability to come to a logical conclusion from given data influence;
3. ability to distinguish between fact and assumption;
4. ability to examine facts as evidence for or against hypotheses.

Numerous skills can be generated depending on the different emphases placed on the concept of critical thinking as well as the problem situation. These various skills come into play as determined by the emphases placed on the concept of critical thinking as well as the specific problem situation.

There seems to be little disagreement as to the worth or need for teaching critical thinking skills in the elementary grades. Yet a majority of our schools have not made a conscious, well-coordinated effort toward teaching critical thinking. Content area curricula have stressed the literal comprehension aspect of learning. Actually, many of the curriculum objectives which make no mention of critical thinking abilities can be realized only

through an improvement in critical thinking ability.

Examples:

1. Literature (English) students are asked to interpret and analyze various literary selections. This necessitates going beyond comprehension of plot and simple character realization in order to solve the problem of symbolic representation of an abstract concept. In addition, literary appreciation calls for sensitive reactions to the elements of word choice, syntax, and broad organizational patterns.
2. Social studies students must be ready and willing to utilize the ideas he has found and deliberated. This information should become a part of his personal awareness and support of his own political, social and economic philosophies.
3. Science students definitely need a more critical approach to the reading of modern scientific materials. Of primary importance is the awareness of students to the possibility that certain material is obsolete. In the reading of scientific materials, a student has an opportunity to learn to follow the inductive process of reasoning as it appears in printed form. Students must learn to be selective in their reading. From an often confusing mass of data, they must choose that which clearly aids in the formulation and evaluation

of hypotheses.

4. Mathematics students need to search for the most precise definitions. In many verbal statements or problems students must also search for that which is pertinent. (i.e. irrelevant data, hidden questions)

I. Required: Participant must select one of the options below:

A. View and assess components of a video-tape, "The Directed Reading Thinking Activity."

Activities: 1) Below is an outline of the steps in a traditional Directed Reading Activity. Read this outline carefully and then construct an outline of the steps which you observed in the video-tape demonstration. 2) Critically compare both outlines with emphasis on the advantages and disadvantages of each for classroom use. 3) Construct a composite outline which utilizes the most positive elements of both approaches. 4) Read the excerpt version by Russell Stauffer, "Directed Reading Thinking Activity Illustrations," Teaching Reading As A Thinking Activity, (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 60-78.

STEPS IN A DIRECTED READING ACTIVITY

1. Readiness
    a. Discussing previous experiences related to the lesson.
    b. Studying pictures where appropriate
    c. Discussing pronunciation and meaning of key words in the lesson
    d. Developing geographical and time concepts where necessary
    e. Setting a motive for reading. What shall we read for?
2. Silent reading in class or as homework
3. Follow-up activities
    a. Rereading (often oral and always with a specific purpose)
        1) To appraise reading skill
        2) To check on specific information
        3) To help others enjoy a particularly fine description, a humorous incident, etc.

b. Discussion of the content with emphasis on interpretation

1) Comprehension

2) Critical reading (thinking)

c. Study and creative activities

1) Tests

2) Vocabulary practice

3) Worksheets to strengthen specific skills

4) Compositions on topics related to reading

d. Related reading

B. Attend teacher lectures/demonstrations on "Activities for the Development of Comprehension and Critical Thinking Skills."

Activities: 1) Participate in preparation of materials in workshop sessions. 2) Prepare and present a classroom mini-lesson on the "Teaching of Comprehension and Critical Thinking Skills."

LECTURE OUTLINE (five sessions of two hour durations)

1. Session I - Introduction to critical thinking

a. Critical thinking defined

b. Relationship between critical thinking and critical reading

c. Justification

d. Operationalizing of critical thinking skills (components)

2. Session II - Simulation of critical thinking activities

a. Matching authors and their styles

b. Patterns in writing

c. Analyzing propaganda techniques in advertising and editorials

3. Session III - Approaches to the teaching of critical thinking in grades K-6

   a. The directed reading thinking activity

   b. Demonstration lesson utilizing film loops and study units

4. Session IV - Measurement and evaluation of critical thinking ability

   a. Examination of critical thinking test

   b. Construction of critical thinking test items

5. Session V - Workshop development of methods and materials to teach critical thinking skills. Small groups of students given task cards which indicate the skill to be taught and describes the raw materials which must be utilized.

C. Read the articles dealing with comprehension and critical thinking skills from:

King, Martha, Bernice Ellinger and Willavene Wolf, ed., Critical Thinking. (New York: J. P. Lippincott Co., 1967),

1. pp. 25-29*
2. pp. 29-39*
3. pp. 35-45*
4. pp. 63-69
5. pp. 162-166
6. pp. 167-175
7. pp. 231-242
8. pp. 319-325
9. pp. 326-331

*Required plus three additional articles

Activity: Critically answer the following:

1. Define critical thinking and list what you consider the five most vital component skills.

2. List three major reasons for including critical thinking as an important learning for the elementary school.

3. List and discuss five classroom activities designed to promote critical thinking in the classroom.

4. What are the different techniques of propaganda?

5. Specifically, how can you apply the information presented in the attached articles in your own reading?

D. Read the "Critical Thinking Battery" by J. E. Cillizza included in this module.

Activities: 1) Completely answer all questions in the four tests in The Battery. 2) Score test results using The Battery Key which is included. 3) Develop at least one mini-lesson for each of the twelve subsets of The Battery. (each mini-lesson should teach one of the subtests skills)

II. Optional Activities: participant may select options below for extra credit.

A. Develop a video-tape presentation which demonstrates the teaching of comprehension and critical thinking skills.

B. Compile an annotated bibliography of books and articles dealing with the teaching of comprehension and critical thinking skills.

C. Develop a unit which utilizes the newspaper to teach comprehension and critical thinking skills. (select an appropriate grade level)

D. Critique the movie "Schools Without Failure" by M. Glaser.

E. Select an elementary tradebook and develop a study guide to accompany the book which will develop comprehension and critical thinking skills. (use Barrett Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension [attached] as a guide).

F. Critique the movie, "Reading Growth: Reading Creatively."

POST-ASSESSMENT

Directions: Complete the even-numbered items from the Watson-Glaser Test of Critical Thinking.

Competency will be certified when your module coordinator has ascertained that the submitted post-assessment is of acceptable quality.

Remediation: Alternate learning activities are available on a contractual basis with the module coordinator.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Barrett, Thomas. Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension.

2. Cillizza, J.E., "The Construction and Evaluation of a Test of Critical Thinking Ability," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University, 1970.

3. King, Martha, Bernice Ellinger, and Willavene Wolf, eds., Critical Reading. New York: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1967.

4. Stauffer, Russell. Teaching Reading As A Thinking Process. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

5. Watson, Goodwin, and Edward Maynard Glaser. Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1951.

Movies

1. "Schools Without Failure"

2. "Reading Growth: Reading Creatively"

These films are available from:

Film Rental Center of Syracuse University
1455 East Colvin Street
Syracuse, New York
13210